

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

the treaty struck at the Russian fabric as a whole, jeopardized the welfare of Russia in Asia, and threatened to extend the war to the heart of the Asiatic continent. . . . There was . . . every possibility that Germany would, by taking advantage of the antipathy between Georgia and Armenia, open the road through the Caucasus to Central Asia. It was also considered not improbable that a Turko-German army might materialize for a campaign against India through Afghanistan. . . . German and Turkish agents were busy throughout the country lying between the Black Sea and the Indian frontier of Afghanistan. . . .

Such in brief were the dangers confronting us in the Asiatic theatre, and it was therefore essential that we should gain and maintain touch with the situation between the Caspian Sea and Chinese Turkestan. . . . There was a complete absence of all regular government in Central Asia. . . . It was known, too, that a movement was afoot for the creation of a Mohammedan state to include Russian Turkestan and the Caucasus, a scheme that had already formed the subject of overtures to Afghanistan. . . . In Central Asia there was a considerable body of opinion well disposed towards the Allied cause. . . . Although it was not contemplated to afford effective military support to pro-Allied elements, a small British military organization was essential from which the antennae could radiate for the acquisition of information, and to exploit whatever appeared favorable.¹²

Another British officer, also a participant in intervention in Central Asia, gave an even more dramatic description of the danger facing the British Empire:

In early 1918 a German Army Corps, ill spared from the West, was on its way to Baku, there to be backed by good Turkish infantry; in northern Afghanistan, Osmanli drill-sergeants and Magyar gun-layers of the "Kaiserliche and Koenigliche Ost-Indische Abteilung" laboured to drill the Afghan army and to cajole His Majesty of Kabul to wage war against

the British. In
Turkistan, in the remote prison camps of Kazalinsk, Perovsk,
and Skobelef,
emissaries worked to organize scores of thousands of
Magyars, Austrians, and
Germans, taken at Przemyśl and in Galicia, into battalions
and brigades,
and to fit them out in good new boots and uniforms under
the complacent
sway of the treason-bacteria that incubated in Frankfort's
hellbroth, had
rotted Russia. . . . So news and information was essential,
and since there
were tens of thousands of tons of cotton of Ferghana ready
baled in the ware-
houses and on the wharves of Turkistan, it behoved us to
take some energetic
step to prevent this priceless raw material from reaching
the nitrating shops

12 *Op. cit.*, pp. i ff.